

Long before daylight the camp at Nephi was astir. The cattle were driven out to water and pasture. While the men unchained the wheels and drew the wagons apart and clear for yoking in, the women cooked forty breakfasts over forty fires. The children, in the chill of dawn, clustered about the fires, sharing places, here and there, with the last relief of the night-watch waiting sleepily for coffee.

It requires time to get a large train such as ours under way, for its speed is the speed of the slowest. So the sun was an hour high and the day was already uncomfortably hot when we rolled out of Nephi and on into the sandy barrens. No inhabitant of the place saw us off. All chose to remain indoors, thus making our departure as ominous as they had made our arrival the night before.

Again it was long hours of parching heat and biting dust, sage-brush and sand, and a land accursed. No dwellings of men, neither cattle nor fences, nor any sign of human kind, did we encounter all that day; and at night we made our wagon-circle beside an empty stream, in the damp sand of which we dug many holes that filled slowly with water seepage.

Our subsequent journey is always a broken experience to me. We made camp so many times, always with the wagons drawn in circle, that to my child mind a weary long time passed after Nephi. But always, strong upon all of us, was that sense of drifting to an impending and certain doom.

We averaged about fifteen miles a day. I know, for my father had said it was sixty miles to Fillmore, the next Mormon settlement, and we made three camps on the way. This meant four days of travel. From Nephi to the last camp of which I have any memory we must have taken two weeks or a little less.

At Fillmore the inhabitants were hostile, as all had been since Salt Lake. They laughed at us when we tried to buy food, and were not above taunting us with being Missourians.

When we entered the place, hitched before the largest house of the dozen houses that composed the settlement were two saddle-horses, dusty, streaked with sweat, and drooping. The old man I have mentioned, the one with long, sunburnt hair and buckskin shirt and who seemed a sort of aide or lieutenant to father, rode close to our wagon and indicated the jaded saddle-animals with a cock of his head.

"Not sparin' horseflesh, Captain," he muttered in a low voice. "An' what in the name of Sam Hill are they hard-riding for if it ain't for us?"

But my father had already noted the condition of the two animals, and my eager eyes had seen him. And I had seen his eyes flash, his lips tighten, and haggard lines form for a moment on his dusty face. That was all. But I put two and two together, and knew that the two tired saddle-horses were just one more added touch of ominousness to the situation.

"I guess they're keeping an eye on us, Laban," was my father's sole comment.

It was at Fillmore that I saw a man that I was to see again. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, well on in middle age, with all the evidence of good health and immense strength--strength not alone of body but of will. Unlike most men I was accustomed to about me, he was smooth-shaven. Several days' growth of beard showed that he was already well-grayed. His mouth was unusually wide, with thin lips tightly compressed as if he had lost many of his front teeth. His nose was large, square, and thick. So was his face square, wide between the cheekbones, underhung with massive jaws, and topped with a broad, intelligent forehead. And the eyes, rather small, a little more than the width of an eye apart, were the bluest blue I had ever seen.

It was at the flour-mill at Fillmore that I first saw this man. Father, with several of our company, had gone there to try to buy flour, and I, disobeying my mother in my curiosity to see more of our enemies, had tagged along unperceived. This man was one of four or five who stood in a group with the miller during the interview.

"You seen that smooth-faced old cuss?" Laban said to father, after we had got outside and were returning to camp.

Father nodded.

"Well, that's Lee," Laban continued. "I seen'm in Salt Lake. He's a regular son-of-a-gun. Got nineteen wives and fifty children, they all say. An' he's rank crazy on religion. Now, what's he followin' us up for through this God-forsaken country?"

Our weary, doomed drifting went on. The little settlements, wherever water and soil permitted, were from twenty to fifty miles apart. Between stretched the barrenness of sand and alkali and drought. And at every settlement our peaceful attempts to buy food were vain. They denied us harshly, and wanted to know who of us had sold them food when we drove them from Missouri. It was useless on our part to tell them we were from Arkansas. From Arkansas we truly were, but they insisted on our being Missourians.

At Beaver, five days' journey south from Fillmore, we saw Lee again. And again we saw hard-ridden horses tethered before the houses. But we did not see Lee at Parowan.

Cedar City was the last settlement. Laban, who had ridden on ahead, came back and reported to father. His first news was significant.

"I seen that Lee skedaddling out as I rid in, Captain. An' there's more men-folk an' horses in Cedar City than the size of the place 'd warrant."

But we had no trouble at the settlement. Beyond refusing to sell us food, they left us to ourselves. The women and children stayed in the houses, and though some of the men appeared in sight they did not, as on former occasions, enter our camp and taunt us.

It was at Cedar City that the Wainwright baby died. I remember Mrs. Wainwright weeping and pleading with Laban to try to get some cow's milk.

"It may save the baby's life," she said. "And they've got cow's milk. I saw fresh cows with my own eyes. Go on, please, Laban. It won't hurt you to try. They can only refuse. But they won't. Tell them it's for a baby, a wee little baby. Mormon women have mother's hearts. They couldn't refuse a cup of milk for a wee little baby."

And Laban tried. But, as he told father afterward, he did not get to see any Mormon women. He saw only the Mormon men, who turned him away.

This was the last Mormon outpost. Beyond lay the vast desert, with, on the other side of it, the dream land, ay, the myth land, of California. As our wagons rolled out of the place in the early morning I, sitting beside my father on the driver's seat, saw Laban give expression to his feelings. We had gone perhaps half a mile, and were topping a low rise that would sink Cedar City from view, when Laban turned his horse around, halted it, and stood up in the stirrups. Where he had halted was a new-made grave, and I knew it for the Wainwright baby's--not the first of our graves since we had crossed the Wasatch mountains.

He was a weird figure of a man. Aged and lean, long-faced, hollow-checked, with matted, sunburnt hair that fell below the shoulders of his buckskin shirt, his face was distorted with hatred and helpless rage. Holding his long rifle in his bridle-hand, he shook his free fist at Cedar City.

"God's curse on all of you!" he cried out. "On your children, and on your babes unborn. May drought destroy your crops. May you eat sand seasoned with the venom of rattlesnakes. May the sweet water of your springs turn to bitter alkali. May . . ."

Here his words became indistinct as our wagons rattled on; but his heaving shoulders and brandishing fist attested that he had only begun to lay the curse. That he expressed the general feeling in our train was evidenced by the many women who leaned from the wagons, thrusting out gaunt forearms and shaking bony, labour-malformed fists at the last of Mormondom. A man, who walked in the sand and goaded the oxen of the wagon behind ours, laughed and waved his goad. It was unusual, that laugh, for there had been no laughter in our train for many days.

"Give 'm hell, Laban," he encouraged. "Them's my sentiments."

And as our train rolled on I continued to look back at Laban, standing in his stirrups by the baby's grave. Truly he was a weird figure, with his long hair, his moccasins, and fringed leggings. So old and weather-beaten was his buckskin shirt that ragged filaments, here and there, showed where proud fringes once had been. He was a man of flying tatters. I remember, at his waist, dangled dirty tufts of hair that, far back in the journey, after a shower of rain, were wont to show glossy black. These I knew were Indian scalps, and the sight of them always thrilled me.

"It will do him good," father commended, more to himself than to me. "I've been looking for days for him to blow up."

"I wish he'd go back and take a couple of scalps," I volunteered.

My father regarded me quizzically.

"Don't like the Mormons, eh, son?"

I shook my head and felt myself swelling with the inarticulate hate that possessed me.

"When I grow up," I said, after a minute, "I'm goin' gunning for them."

"You, Jesse!" came my mother's voice from inside the wagon. "Shut your mouth instanter." And to my father: "You ought to be ashamed letting the boy talk on like that."

Two days' journey brought us to Mountain Meadows, and here, well beyond the last settlement, for the first time we did not form the wagon-circle. The wagons were roughly in a circle, but there were many gaps, and the wheels were not chained. Preparations were made to stop a week. The cattle must be rested for the real desert, though this was desert enough in all seeming. The same low hills of sand were about us, but sparsely covered with scrub brush. The flat was sandy, but there was some grass--more than we had encountered in many days. Not more than a hundred feet from camp was a weak spring that barely supplied human needs. But farther along the bottom various other weak springs emerged from the hillsides, and it was at these that the cattle watered.

We made camp early that day, and, because of the programme to stay a week, there was a general overhauling of soiled clothes by the women, who planned to start washing on the morrow. Everybody worked till nightfall. While some of the men mended harness others repaired the frames and ironwork of the wagons. There was much heating and hammering of iron and tightening of bolts and nuts. And I remember coming upon Laban, sitting cross-legged in the shade of a wagon and sewing away till nightfall on a new pair of moccasins. He was the only man in our train who wore moccasins and buckskin, and I have an impression that he had not belonged to our company when it left Arkansas. Also, he had neither wife, nor family, nor wagon of his own. All he possessed was his horse, his rifle, the clothes he stood up in, and a couple of blankets that were hauled in the Mason wagon.

Next morning it was that our doom fell. Two days' journey beyond the last Mormon outpost, knowing that no Indians were about and apprehending nothing from the Indians on any count, for the first time we had not chained our wagons in the solid circle, placed guards on the cattle, nor set a night-watch.

My awakening was like a nightmare. It came as a sudden blast of sound. I was only stupidly awake for the first moments and did nothing except to try to analyze and identify the various noises that went to compose the blast that continued without let up. I could hear near and distant explosions of rifles, shouts and curses of men, women screaming, and children bawling. Then I could make out the thuds and squeals of bullets that hit wood and iron in the wheels and under-construction of the wagon. Whoever it was that was shooting, the aim was too low. When I started to rise, my mother, evidently just in the act of dressing, pressed me down with her hand. Father, already up and about, at this stage erupted into the wagon.

"Out of it!" he shouted. "Quick! To the ground!"

He wasted no time. With a hook-like clutch that was almost a blow, so swift was it, he flung me bodily out of the rear end of the wagon. I had barely time to crawl out from under when father, mother, and the baby came down pell-mell where I had been.

"Here, Jesse!" father shouted to me, and I joined him in scooping out sand behind the shelter of a wagon-wheel. We worked bare-handed and wildly. Mother joined in.

"Go ahead and make it deeper, Jesse," father ordered,

He stood up and rushed away in the gray light, shouting commands as he ran. (I had learned by now my surname. I was Jesse Fancher. My father was Captain Fancher).

"Lie down!" I could hear him. "Get behind the wagon wheels and burrow in the sand! Family men, get the women and children out of the wagons! Hold your fire! No more shooting! Hold your fire and be ready for the rush when it comes! Single men, join Laban at the right, Cochrane at the left, and me in the centre! Don't stand up! Crawl for it!"

But no rush came. For a quarter of an hour the heavy and irregular firing continued. Our damage had come in the first moments of surprise when a number of the early-rising men were caught exposed in the light of the campfires they were building. The Indians--for Indians Laban declared them to be--had attacked us from the open, and were lying down and firing at us. In the growing light father made ready for them. His position was near to where I lay in the burrow with mother so that I heard him when he cried out:

"Now! all together!"

From left, right, and centre our rifles loosed in a volley. I had popped my head up to see, and I could make out more than one stricken Indian. Their fire immediately ceased, and I could see them scampering back on foot across the open, dragging their dead and wounded with them.

All was work with us on the instant. While the wagons were being dragged and chained into the circle with tongues inside--I saw women and little boys and girls flinging their strength on the wheel spokes to help--we took toll of our losses. First, and gravest of all, our last animal had been run off. Next, lying about the fires they had been building, were seven of our men. Four were dead, and three were dying. Other men, wounded, were being cared for by the women. Little Rish Hardacre had been struck in the arm by a heavy ball. He was no more than six, and I remember looking on with mouth agape while his mother held him on her lap and his father set about bandaging the wound. Little Rish had stopped crying. I could see the tears on his cheeks while he stared wonderingly at a sliver of broken bone sticking out of his forearm.

Granny White was found dead in the Foxwell wagon. She was a fat and helpless old woman who never did anything but sit down all the time and smoke a pipe. She was the mother of Abby Foxwell. And Mrs. Grant had been killed. Her husband sat beside her body. He was very quiet. There were no tears in his eyes. He just sat there, his rifle across his knees, and everybody left him alone.

Under father's directions the company was working like so many beavers. The men dug a big rifle pit in the centre of the corral, forming a breastwork out of the displaced sand. Into this pit the women dragged bedding, food, and all sorts of necessaries from the wagons. All the children helped. There was no whimpering, and little or no excitement. There was work to be done, and all of us were folks born to work.

The big rifle pit was for the women and children. Under the wagons, completely around the circle, a shallow trench was dug and an earthwork thrown up. This was for the fighting men.

Laban returned from a scout. He reported that the Indians had withdrawn the matter of half a mile, and were holding a powwow. Also he had seen them carry six of their number off the field, three of which, he said, were dead.

From time to time, during the morning of that first day, we observed clouds of dust that advertised the movements of considerable bodies of mounted men. These clouds of dust came toward us, hemming us in on all sides. But we saw no living creature. One cloud of dirt only moved away from us. It was a large cloud, and everybody said it was our cattle being driven off. And our forty great wagons that had rolled over the Rockies and half across the continent stood in a helpless circle. Without cattle they could roll no farther.

At noon Laban came in from another scout. He had seen fresh Indians arriving from the south, showing that we were being closed in. It was at this time that we saw a dozen white men ride out on the crest of a low hill to the east and look down on us.

"That settles it," Laban said to father. "The Indians have been put up to it."

"They're white like us," I heard Abby Foxwell complain to mother. "Why don't they come in to us?"

"They ain't whites," I piped up, with a wary eye for the swoop of mother's hand. "They're Mormons."

That night, after dark, three of our young men stole out of camp. I saw them go. They were Will Aden, Abel Milliken, and Timothy Grant.

"They are heading for Cedar City to get help," father told mother while he was snatching a hasty bite of supper.

Mother shook her head.

"There's plenty of Mormons within calling distance of camp," she said. "If they won't help, and they haven't shown any signs, then the Cedar City ones won't either."

"But there are good Mormons and bad Mormons--" father began.

"We haven't found any good ones so far," she shut him off.

Not until morning did I hear of the return of Abel Milliken and Timothy Grant, but I was not long in learning. The whole camp was downcast by reason of their report. The three had gone only a few miles when they were challenged by white men. As soon as Will Aden spoke up, telling that they were from the Fancher Company, going to Cedar City for help, he was shot down. Milliken and Grant escaped back with the news, and the news settled the last hope in the hearts of our company. The whites were behind the Indians, and the doom so long apprehended was upon us.

This morning of the second day our men, going for water, were fired upon. The spring was only a hundred feet outside our circle, but the way to it was commanded by the Indians who now occupied the low hill to the east. It was close range, for the hill could not have been more than fifteen rods away. But the Indians were not good shots, evidently, for our men brought in the water without being hit.

Beyond an occasional shot into camp the morning passed quietly. We had settled down in the rifle pit, and, being used to rough living, were comfortable enough. Of course it was bad for the families of those who had been killed, and there was the taking care of the wounded. I was for ever stealing away from mother in my insatiable curiosity to see everything that was going on, and I managed to see pretty much of everything. Inside the corral, to the south of the big rifle pit, the men dug a hole and buried the seven men and two women all together. Only Mrs. Hastings, who had lost her husband and father, made much trouble. She cried and screamed out, and it took the other women a long time to quiet her.

On the low hill to the east the Indians kept up a tremendous powwowing and yelling. But beyond an occasional harmless shot they did nothing.

"What's the matter with the ornery cusses?" Laban impatiently wanted to know. "Can't they make up their minds what they're goin' to do, an' then do it?"

It was hot in the corral that afternoon. The sun blazed down out of a cloudless sky, and there was no wind. The men, lying with their rifles in the trench under the wagons, were partly shaded; but the big rifle pit, in which were over a hundred women and children, was exposed to the full power of the sun. Here, too, were the

wounded men, over whom we erected awnings of blankets. It was crowded and stifling in the pit, and I was for ever stealing out of it to the firing-line, and making a great to-do at carrying messages for father.

Our grave mistake had been in not forming the wagon-circle so as to inclose the spring. This had been due to the excitement of the first attack, when we did not know how quickly it might be followed by a second one. And now it was too late. At fifteen rods' distance from the Indian position on the hill we did not dare unchain our wagons. Inside the corral, south of the graves, we constructed a latrine, and, north of the rifle pit in the centre, a couple of men were told off by father to dig a well for water.

In the mid-afternoon of that day, which was the second day, we saw Lee again. He was on foot, crossing diagonally over the meadow to the north-west just out of rifle-shot from us. Father hoisted one of mother's sheets on a couple of ox-goads lashed together. This was our white flag. But Lee took no notice of it, continuing on his way.

Laban was for trying a long shot at him, but father stopped him, saying that it was evident the whites had not made up their minds what they were going to do with us, and that a shot at Lee might hurry them into making up their minds the wrong way.

"Here, Jesse," father said to me, tearing a strip from the sheet and fastening it to an ox-goad. "Take this and go out and try to talk to that man. Don't tell him anything about what's happened to us. Just try to get him to come in and talk with us."

As I started to obey, my chest swelling with pride in my mission, Jed Dunham cried out that he wanted to go with me. Jed was about my own age.

"Dunham, can your boy go along with Jesse?" father asked Jed's father. "Two's better than one. They'll keep each other out of mischief."

So Jed and I, two youngsters of nine, went out under the white flag to talk with the leader of our enemies. But Lee would not talk. When he saw us coming he started to sneak away. We never got within calling distance of him, and after a while he must have hidden in the brush; for we never laid eyes on him again, and we knew he couldn't have got clear away.

Jed and I beat up the brush for hundreds of yards all around. They hadn't told us how long we were to be gone, and since the Indians did not fire on us we kept on going. We were away over two hours, though had either of us been alone he would have been back in a quarter of the time. But Jed was bound to outbrave me, and I was equally bound to outbrave him.

Our foolishness was not without profit. We walked, boldly about under our white flag, and learned how thoroughly our camp was beleaguered. To the south of our train, not more than half a mile away, we made out a large Indian camp. Beyond, on the meadow, we could see Indian boys riding hard on their horses.

Then there was the Indian position on the hill to the east. We managed to climb a low hill so as to look into this position. Jed and I spent half an hour trying to count them, and concluded, with much guessing, that there must be at least a couple of hundred. Also, we saw white men with them and doing a great deal of talking.

North-east of our train, not more than four hundred yards from it, we discovered a large camp of whites behind a low rise of ground. And beyond we could see fifty or sixty saddle-horses grazing. And a mile or so away, to the north, we saw a tiny cloud of dust approaching. Jed and I waited until we saw a single man, riding fast, gallop into the camp of the whites.

When we got back into the corral the first thing that happened to me was a smack from mother for having stayed away so long; but father praised Jed and me when we gave our report.

"Watch for an attack now maybe, Captain," Aaron Cochrane said to father. "That man the boys seen has rid in for a purpose. The whites are holding the Indians till they get orders from higher up. Maybe that man brung the orders one way or the other. They ain't sparing horseflesh, that's one thing sure."

Half an hour after our return Laban attempted a scout under a white flag. But he had not gone twenty feet outside the circle when the Indians opened fire on him and sent him back on the run.

Just before sundown I was in the rifle pit holding the baby, while mother was spreading the blankets for a bed. There were so many of us that we were packed and jammed. So little room was there that many of the women the night before had sat up and slept with their heads bowed on their knees. Right alongside of me, so near that when he tossed his arms about he struck me on the shoulder, Silas Dunlap was dying. He had been shot in the head in the first attack, and all the second day was out of his head and raving and singing doggerel. One of his songs, that he sang over and over, until it made mother frantic nervous, was:

"Said the first little devil to the second little devil, 'Give me some tobaccy from your old tobaccy box.' Said the second little devil to the first little devil, 'Stick close to your money and close to your rocks, An' you'll always have tobaccy in your old tobaccy box.'"

I was sitting directly alongside of him, holding the baby, when the attack burst on us. It was sundown, and I was staring with all my eyes at Silas Dunlap who was just in the final act of dying. His wife, Sarah, had one hand resting on his forehead. Both she and her Aunt Martha were crying softly. And then it came--explosions and bullets from hundreds of rifles. Clear around from east to west, by way of the north, they had strung out in half a circle and were pumping lead in our position. Everybody in the rifle pit flattened down. Lots of the younger children set up a-squalling, and it kept the women busy hushing them. Some of the women screamed at first, but not many.

Thousands of shots must have rained in on us in the next few minutes. How I wanted to crawl out to the trench under the wagons where our men were keeping up a steady but irregular fire! Each was shooting on his own whenever he saw a man to pull trigger on. But mother suspected me, for she made me crouch down and keep right on holding the baby.

I was just taking a look at Silas Dunlap--he was still quivering-- when the little Castleton baby was killed. Dorothy Castleton, herself only about ten, was holding it, so that it was killed in her arms. She was not hurt at all. I heard them talking about it, and they conjectured that the bullet must have struck high on one of the wagons and been deflected down into the rifle pit. It was just an accident, they said, and that except for such accidents we were safe where we were.

When I looked again Silas Dunlap was dead, and I suffered distinct disappointment in being cheated out of witnessing that particular event. I had never been lucky enough to see a man actually die before my eyes.

Dorothy Castleton got hysterics over what had happened, and yelled and screamed for a long time and she set Mrs. Hastings going again. Altogether such a row was raised that father sent Watt Cummings crawling back to us to find out what was the matter.

Well along into twilight the heavy firing ceased, although there were scattering shots during the night. Two of our men were wounded in this second attack, and were brought into the rifle pit. Bill Tyler was killed instantly, and they buried him, Silas Dunlap, and the Castleton baby, in the dark alongside of the others.

All during the night men relieved one another at sinking the well deeper; but the only sign of water they got was damp sand. Some of the men fetched a few pails of water from the spring, but were fired upon, and they gave it up when Jeremy Hopkins had his left hand shot off at the wrist.

Next morning, the third day, it was hotter and dryer than ever. We awoke thirsty, and there was no cooking. So dry were our mouths that we could not eat. I tried a piece of stale bread mother gave me, but had to give it up. The firing rose and fell. Sometimes there were hundreds shooting into the camp. At other times came lulls in which not a shot was fired. Father was continually cautioning our men not to waste shots because we were running short of ammunition.

And all the time the men went on digging the well. It was so deep that they were hoisting the sand up in buckets. The men who hoisted were exposed, and one of them was wounded in the shoulder. He was Peter Bromley, who drove oxen for the Bloodgood wagon, and he was engaged to marry Jane Bloodgood. She jumped out of the rifle pit and ran right to him while the bullets were flying and led him back into shelter. About midday the well caved in, and there was lively work digging out the couple who were buried in the sand. Amos Wentworth did not come to for an hour. After that they timbered the well with bottom boards from the wagons and wagon tongues, and the digging went on. But all they could get, and they were twenty feet down, was damp sand. The water would not seep.

By this time the conditions in the rifle pit were terrible. The children were complaining for water, and the babies, hoarse from much crying, went on crying. Robert Carr, another wounded man, lay about ten feet from mother and me. He was out of his head, and kept thrashing his arms about and calling for water. And some of the women were almost as bad, and kept raving against the Mormons and Indians. Some of the women prayed a great deal, and the three grown Demdike sisters, with their mother, sang gospel hymns. Other women got damp sand that was hoisted out of the bottom of the well, and packed it against the bare bodies of the babies to try to cool and soothe them.

The two Fairfax brothers couldn't stand it any longer, and, with pails in their hands, crawled out under a wagon and made a dash for the spring. Giles never got half way, when he went down. Roger made it there and back without being hit. He brought two pails part-full, for some splashed out when he ran. Giles crawled back, and when they helped him into the rifle pit he was bleeding at the mouth and coughing.

Two part-pails of water could not go far among over a hundred of us, not counting the men. Only the babies, and the very little children, and the wounded men, got any. I did not get a sip, although mother dipped a bit of cloth into the several spoonfuls she got for the baby and wiped my mouth out. She did not even do that for herself, for she left me the bit of damp rag to chew.

The situation grew unspeakably worse in the afternoon. The quiet sun blazed down through the clear windless air and made a furnace of our hole in the sand. And all about us were the explosions of rifles and yells of the Indians. Only once in a while did father permit a single shot from the trench, and at that only by our best marksmen, such as Laban and Timothy Grant. But a steady stream of lead poured into our position all the time. There were no more disastrous ricochets, however; and our men in the trench, no longer firing, lay low and escaped damage. Only four were wounded, and only one of them very badly.

Father came in from the trench during a lull in the firing. He sat for a few minutes alongside mother and me without speaking. He seemed to be listening to all the moaning and crying for water that was going up. Once he climbed out of the rifle pit and went over to investigate the well. He brought back only damp sand, which he plastered thick on the chest and shoulders of Robert Carr. Then he went to where Jed Dunham and his mother were, and sent for Jed's father to come in from the trench. So closely packed were we that when anybody moved about inside the rifle pit he had to crawl carefully over the bodies of those lying down.

After a time father came crawling back to us.

"Jesse, he asked, "are you afraid of the Indians?"

I shook my head emphatically, guessing that I was to be sent on another proud mission.

"Are you afraid of the damned Mormons?"

"Not of any damned Mormon," I answered, taking advantage of the opportunity to curse our enemies without fear of the avenging back of mother's hand.

I noted the little smile that curled his tired lips for the moment when he heard my reply.

"Well, then, Jesse," he said, "will you go with Jed to the spring for water?"

I was all eagerness.

"We're going to dress the two of you up as girls," he continued, "so that maybe they won't fire on you."

I insisted on going as I was, as a male human that wore pants; but I surrendered quickly enough when father suggested that he would find some other boy to dress up and go along with Jed.

A chest was fetched in from the Chattox wagon. The Chattox girls were twins and of about a size with Jed and me. Several of the women got around to help. They were the Sunday dresses of the Chattox twins, and had come in the chest all the way from Arkansas.

In her anxiety mother left the baby with Sarah Dunlap, and came as far as the trench with me. There, under a wagon and behind the little breast-work of sand, Jed and I received our last instructions. Then we crawled out and stood up in the open. We were dressed precisely alike--white stockings, white dresses, with big blue sashes, and white sunbonnets. Jed's right and my left hand were clasped together. In each of our free hands we carried two small pails.

"Take it easy," father cautioned, as we began our advance. "Go slow. Walk like girls."

Not a shot was fired. We made the spring safely, filled our pails, and lay down and took a good drink ourselves. With a full pail in each hand we made the return trip. And still not a shot was fired.

I cannot remember how many journeys we made--fully fifteen or twenty. We walked slowly, always going out with hands clasped, always coming back slowly with four pails of water. It was astonishing how thirsty we were. We lay down several times and took long drinks.

But it was too much for our enemies. I cannot imagine that the Indians would have withheld their fire for so long, girls or no girls, had they not obeyed instructions from the whites who were with them. At any rate Jed and I were just starting on another trip when a rifle went off from the Indian hill, and then another.

"Come back!" mother cried out.

I looked at Jed, and found him looking at me. I knew he was stubborn and had made up his mind to be the last one in. So I started to advance, and at the same instant he started.

"You!--Jesse!" cried my mother. And there was more than a smacking in the way she said it.

Jed offered to clasp hands, but I shook my head.

"Run for it," I said.

And while we hotfooted it across the sand it seemed all the rifles on Indian hill were turned loose on us. I got to the spring a little ahead, so that Jed had to wait for me to fill my pails.

"Now run for it," he told me; and from the leisurely way he went about filling his own pails I knew he was determined to be in last.

So I crouched down, and, while I waited, watched the puffs of dust raised by the bullets. We began the return side by side and running.

"Not so fast," I cautioned him, "or you'll spill half the water."

That stung him, and he slacked back perceptibly. Midway I stumbled and fell headlong. A bullet, striking directly in front of me, filled my eyes with sand. For the moment I thought I was shot.

"Done it a-purpose," Jed sneered as I scrambled to my feet. He had stood and waited for me.

I caught his idea. He thought I had fallen deliberately in order to spill my water and go back for more. This rivalry between us was a serious matter--so serious, indeed, that I immediately took advantage of what he had imputed and raced back to the spring. And Jed Dunham, scornful of the bullets that were puffing dust all around him, stood there upright in the open and waited for me. We came in side by side, with honours even in our boys' foolhardiness. But when we delivered the water Jed had only one pailful. A bullet had gone through the other pail close to the bottom.

Mother took it out on me with a lecture on disobedience. She must have known, after what I had done, that father wouldn't let her smack me; for, while she was lecturing, father winked at me across her shoulder. It was the first time he had ever winked at me.

Back in the rifle pit Jed and I were heroes. The women wept and blessed us, and kissed us and mauled us. And I confess I was proud of the demonstration, although, like Jed, I let on that I did not like all such making-over. But Jeremy Hopkins, a great bandage about the stump of his left wrist, said we were the stuff white men were made out of--men like Daniel Boone, like Kit Carson, and Davy Crockett. I was prouder of that than all the rest.

The remainder of the day I seem to have been bothered principally with the pain of my right eye caused by the sand that had been kicked into it by the bullet. The eye was bloodshot, mother said; and to me it seemed to hurt just as much whether I kept it open or closed. I tried both ways.

Things were quieter in the rifle pit, because all had had water, though strong upon us was the problem of how the next water was to be procured. Coupled with this was the known fact that our ammunition was almost exhausted. A thorough overhauling of the wagons by father had resulted in finding five pounds of powder. A very little more was in the flasks of the men.

I remembered the sundown attack of the night before, and anticipated it this time by crawling to the trench before sunset. I crept into a place alongside of Laban. He was busy chewing tobacco, and did not notice me. For some time I watched him, fearing that when he discovered me he would order me back. He would take a long squint out between the wagon wheels, chew steadily a while, and then spit carefully into a little depression he had made in the sand.

"How's tricks?" I asked finally. It was the way he always addressed me.

"Fine," he answered. "Most remarkable fine, Jesse, now that I can chew again. My mouth was that dry that I couldn't chew from sun-up to when you brung the water."

Here a man showed head and shoulders over the top of the little hill to the north-east occupied by the whites. Laban sighted his rifle on him for a long minute. Then he shook his head.

"Four hundred yards. Nope, I don't risk it. I might get him, and then again I mightn't, an' your dad is mighty anxious about the powder."

"What do you think our chances are?" I asked, man-fashion, for, after my water exploit, I was feeling very much the man.

Laban seemed to consider carefully for a space ere he replied.

"Jesse, I don't mind tellin' you we're in a damned bad hole. But we'll get out, oh, we'll get out, you can bet your bottom dollar."

"Some of us ain't going to get out," I objected.

"Who, for instance?" he queried.

"Why, Bill Tyler, and Mrs. Grant, and Silas Dunlap, and all the rest."

"Aw, shucks, Jesse--they're in the ground already. Don't you know everybody has to bury their dead as they traipse along? They've ben doin' it for thousands of years I reckon, and there's just as many alive as ever they was. You see, Jesse, birth and death go hand-in-hand. And they're born as fast as they die--faster, I reckon, because they've increased and multiplied. Now you, you might a-got killed this afternoon packin' water. But you're here, ain't you, a-gassin' with me an' likely to grow up an' be the father of a fine large family in Californy. They say everything grows large in Californy."

This cheerful way of looking at the matter encouraged me to dare sudden expression of a long covetousness.

"Say, Laban, supposin' you got killed here--"

"Who?--me?" he cried.

"I'm just sayin' supposin'," I explained.

"Oh, all right then. Go on. Supposin' I am killed?"

"Will you give me your scalps?"

"Your ma'll smack you if she catches you a-wearin' them," he temporized.

"I don't have to wear them when she's around. Now if you got killed, Laban, somebody'd have to get them scalps. Why not me?"

"Why not?" he repeated. "That's correct, and why not you? All right, Jesse. I like you, and your pa. The minute I'm killed the scalps is yours, and the scalpin' knife, too. And there's Timothy Grant for witness. Did you hear, Timothy?"

Timothy said he had heard, and I lay there speechless in the stifling trench, too overcome by my greatness of good fortune to be able to utter a word of gratitude.

I was rewarded for my foresight in going to the trench. Another general attack was made at sundown, and thousands of shots were fired into us. Nobody on our side was scratched. On the other hand, although we fired barely thirty shots, I saw Laban and Timothy Grant each get an Indian. Laban told me that from the first only the Indians had done the shooting. He was certain that no white had fired a shot. All of which sorely puzzled him. The whites neither offered us aid nor attacked us, and all the while were on visiting terms with the Indians who were attacking us.

Next morning found the thirst harsh upon us. I was out at the first hint of light. There had been a heavy dew, and men, women, and children were lapping it up with their tongues from off the wagon-tongues, brake-blocks, and wheel-tyres.

There was talk that Laban had returned from a scout just before daylight; that he had crept close to the position of the whites; that they were already up; and that in the light of their camp-fires he had seen them praying in a large circle. Also he reported from what few words he caught that they were praying about us and what was to be done with us.

"May God send them the light then," I heard one of the Demdike sisters say to Abby Foxwell.

"And soon," said Abby Foxwell, "for I don't know what we'll do a whole day without water, and our powder is about gone."

Nothing happened all morning. Not a shot was fired. Only the sun blazed down through the quiet air. Our thirst grew, and soon the babies were crying and the younger children whimpering and complaining. At noon Will Hamilton took two large pails and started for the spring. But before he could crawl under the wagon Ann Demdike ran and got her arms around him and tried to hold him back. But he talked to her, and kissed her, and went on. Not a shot was fired, nor was any fired all the time he continued to go out and bring back water.

"Praise God!" cried old Mrs. Demdike. "It is a sign. They have relented."

This was the opinion of many of the women.

About two o'clock, after we had eaten and felt better, a white man appeared, carrying a white flag. Will Hamilton went out and talked to him, came back and talked with father and the rest of our men, and then went out to the stranger again. Farther back we could see a man standing and looking on, whom we recognized as Lee.

With us all was excitement. The women were so relieved that they were crying and kissing one another, and old Mrs. Demdike and others were hallelujahing and blessing God. The proposal, which our men had accepted, was that we would put ourselves under the flag of truce and be protected from the Indians.

"We had to do it," I heard father tell mother.

He was sitting, droop-shouldered and dejected, on a wagon-tongue.

"But what if they intend treachery?" mother asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We've got to take the chance that they don't," he said. "Our ammunition is gone."

Some of our men were unchaining one of our wagons and rolling it out of the way. I ran across to see what was happening. In came Lee himself, followed by two empty wagons, each driven by one man. Everybody crowded around Lee. He said that they had had a hard time with the Indians keeping them off of us, and that Major Higbee, with fifty of the Mormon militia, were ready to take us under their charge.

But what made father and Laban and some of the men suspicious was when Lee said that we must put all our rifles into one of the wagons so as not to arouse the animosity of the Indians. By so doing we would appear to be the prisoners of the Mormon militia.

Father straightened up and was about to refuse when he glanced to Laban, who replied in an undertone. "They ain't no more use in our hands than in the wagon, seein' as the powder's gone."

Two of our wounded men who could not walk were put into the wagons, and along with them were put all the little children. Lee seemed to be picking them out over eight and under eight. Jed and I were large for our age, and we were nine besides; so Lee put us with the older bunch and told us we were to march with the women on foot.

When he took our baby from mother and put it in a wagon she started to object. Then I saw her lips draw tightly together, and she gave in. She was a gray-eyed, strong-featured, middle-aged woman, large-boned and fairly stout. But the long journey and hardship had told on her, so that she was hollow-cheeked and gaunt, and like all the women in the company she wore an expression of brooding, never-ceasing anxiety.

It was when Lee described the order of march that Laban came to me. Lee said that the women and the children that walked should go first in the line, following behind the two wagons. Then the men, in single file, should follow the women. When Laban heard this he came to me, untied the scalps from his belt, and fastened them to my waist.

"But you ain't killed yet," I protested.

"You bet your life I ain't," he answered lightly.

"I've just reformed, that's all. This scalp-wearin' is a vain thing and heathen." He stopped a moment as if he had forgotten something, then, as he turned abruptly on his heel to regain the men of our company, he called over his shoulder, "Well, so long, Jesse."

I was wondering why he should say good-bye when a white man came riding into the corral. He said Major Higbee had sent him to tell us to hurry up, because the Indians might attack at any moment.

So the march began, the two wagons first. Lee kept along with the women and walking children. Behind us, after waiting until we were a couple of hundred feet in advance, came our men. As we emerged from the corral we could see the militia just a short distance away. They were leaning on their rifles and standing in a long line about six feet apart. As we passed them I could not help noticing how solemn-faced they were. They looked like men at a funeral. So did the women notice this, and some of them began to cry.

I walked right behind my mother. I had chosen this position so that she would not catch-sight of my scalps. Behind me came the three Demdike sisters, two of them helping the old mother. I could hear Lee calling all the time to the men who drove the wagons not to go so fast. A man that one of the Demdike girls said must be Major Higbee sat on a horse watching us go by. Not an Indian was in sight.

By the time our men were just abreast of the militia--I had just looked back to try to see where Jed Dunham was--the thing happened. I heard Major Higbee cry out in a loud voice, "Do your duty!" All the rifles of the militia seemed to go off at once, and our men were falling over and sinking down. All the Demdike women went down at one time. I turned quickly to see how mother was, and she was down. Right alongside of us, out of the bushes, came hundreds of Indians, all shooting. I saw the two Dunlap sisters start on the run across the sand, and took after them, for whites and Indians were all killing us. And as I ran I saw the driver of one of the wagons shooting the two wounded men. The horses of the other wagon were plunging and rearing and their driver was trying to hold them.

It was when the little boy that was I was running after the Dunlap girls that blackness came upon him. All memory there ceases, for Jesse Fancher there ceased, and, as Jesse Fancher, ceased for ever. The form that was Jesse Fancher, the body that was his, being matter and apparitional, like an apparition passed and was not. But the imperishable spirit did not cease. It continued to exist, and, in its next incarnation, became the residing spirit of that apparitional body known as Darrell Standing's which soon is to be taken out and hanged and sent into the nothingness whither all apparitions go.

There is a lifer here in Folsom, Matthew Davies, of old pioneer stock, who is trusty of the scaffold and execution chamber. He is an old man, and his folks crossed the plains in the early days. I have talked with him, and he has verified the massacre in which Jesse Fancher was killed. When this old lifer was a child there was much talk in his family of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The children in the wagons, he said, were saved, because they were too young to tell tales.

All of which I submit. Never, in my life of Darrell Standing, have I read a line or heard a word spoken of the Fancher Company that perished at Mountain Meadows. Yet, in the jacket in San Quentin prison, all this knowledge came to me. I could not create this knowledge out of nothing, any more than could I create dynamite out of nothing. This knowledge and these facts I have related have but one explanation. They are out of the spirit content of me--the spirit that, unlike matter, does not perish.

In closing this chapter I must state that Matthew Davies also told me that some years after the massacre Lee was taken by United States Government officials to the Mountain Meadows and there executed on the site of our old corral.